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THE
HIGHEST CIVILIZATION
A RESULT OF
Christianity and Christian Teaching;
A
DISCOURSE

DELIVERED
AT NORWICH, CONN., NOV. 14, 1865,

ON BEHALF OF
THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING COLLEGIATE AND THEOLOGICAL
EDUCATION AT THE WEST, IN CONNECTION WITH THE
ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

BY
RAY PALMER,
PASTOR OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, ALBANY.

ALBANY, N. Y.:
J. MUNSELL, 78 STATE STREET.
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NOTE.

The thanks of the Board were presented to the Rev. Dr. Palmer for his discourse delivered last evening, and a copy requested for publication.—*Extract from the Minutes.*

J. SPAULDING, Rec. Secretary.

DISCOURSE.

PROVERBS, viii, 11.

For wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.

Wisdom is intelligence as related to ends and the best means of attaining them. It is not a special faculty, but a result of the combined and felicitous working of several faculties. It is more than acuteness and force of intellect. It is more than mere knowledge. It is these in the particular combination and condition requisite in order to the doing of the best things in the best manner.

The wisdom of God is that in him which qualified him intellectually to be the Creator and Governor of the world. The wisdom of man is that in him which enables him to discern and choose what it behooves him to purpose and pursue, and how to direct his efforts in order to success. Without this, in the case of each individual, there can be no security against fatal errors in the ordering of life, and no sure ground of hope as regards ultimate well-being. It is this that gives true wisdom its inestimable value—that makes it more precious than rubies—that it is the

primary condition of all right and good activity. It is, among men, the mother of order, of society, of education, of science, of arts and inventions, of manufactures and commerce, of laws and institutions; the producing cause of all that is involved in well-directed and successful human life. The sacred writer asserts this in the context, in illustration of the general statement of the text. "By me kings reign and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth. Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness. I lead in the way of righteousness—or in the right way—in the midst of the paths of judgment—or in judicious paths—that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures."* It is only in so far as states are founded, and institutions established, and laws enacted, and governments administered, and social and civil life directed, by a true and divine wisdom, that humanity rises to the fulfilment of its earthly destiny. Nothing without wisdom can make a really great and happy people.

I take this general statement, that only a wise people can reach and permanently maintain the highest and best social condition which in the nature of things is possible, as a postulate and starting point as regards what I now propose to say. I place it distinctly before my own mind and yours as indicating the scope and spirit of the present discourse; not as a

* Proverbs, viii, 15, 16, 18, 20 and 21.

thesis to be formally maintained. I desire to develop, illustrate and impress this thought, rather than to spend words in urging proofs of what all will probably be ready, without argument, to concede.

The theme is forcibly suggested by the circumstances under which we are assembled. No annual meeting has ever before brought us face to face with such facts as now confront us. The mighty struggle, the greatest beyond a doubt, if measured by the vastness of the contending forces, that has ever occurred in human history, has, since we last met, been ended. Our national life is saved. Our national unity is vindicated, not only as theoretically a right, but as a great, beneficent and forever settled fact. The future that now opens on us is, of necessity, therefore, new in many of its aspects. It is more solemn, if the responsibilities it imposes be seriously considered; more inspiring, if the possibilities of good which it reveals be clearly comprehended; more appalling, if the liabilities to evil be well weighed; in short, it is more grand and impressive altogether, than any dream of destiny that had ever been suggested to our thought before this war. We cannot shut our eyes on the momentousness of the present crisis.

What then is the pending issue—the thing to be decided as regards our future as a people? Is it not definitely this:— Shall an exalted and permanent civilization be here attained, or shall the degree of civilization already reached decline, and ultimately

perish, in the vices which wealth, luxury and popular ignorance tend always to produce? The one thing, or the other, it may be assumed, is sure to happen. The contest of material forces through which we have lately passed, gigantic as it was, did but inaugurate and typify a contest of intellectual and moral forces, more vast, more complicated, more certainly decisive of our fate, which we are now to wage with such strength and courage as we can. As the result of this contest, a civilization such as no people has as yet achieved is here to be wrought out; or such a social wreck is to be made as shall make us justly a hissing and a by-word to the nations, and plunge humanity itself into despair. We hope that it may be the purpose of God to give us the happy destiny which seems placed within our reach; but our hopes, however sanguine, will not fulfil themselves. Nor may we look to see miracles performed on our behalf. If a splendid and enduring civilization is here to be produced, it is indispensable that we distinctly understand by what means this must be accomplished, and set ourselves at once and faithfully to do the things, on the doing of which, under God, it is conditioned.

The first question that meets us, when we set about a careful examination of the subject is — What is the true idea of civilization? The word is a very familiar one. It may hardly seem necessary to inquire about its meaning. In fact, however, it is popularly used in a very loose and indeterminate manner. Even the

best writers who have discussed the subject have seemed to find it difficult to define the word with any considerable precision; and have commonly been content to employ it in a vague and general sense. Mr. Guizot is a good example. He expressly declines to offer an accurate definition. He prefers to endeavor to specify the particular elements of *the popular conception* of civilization.* This he does sufficiently well perhaps, with the great defect, however, that he fails to bring out with distinctness and discrimination, the highest and most essential element of all — the moral.† His most concise statement is as follows:

“Two elements seem to be comprised in the great fact which we call civilization. It reveals itself by two symptoms; the progress of society, and the progress of individuals; the amelioration of the social system, and the expansion of the mind and faculties of man. Wherever the exterior condition of man becomes enlarged, quickened and improved; wherever the intellectual nature of man distinguishes itself by its energy, brilliancy and grandeur; wherever these two signs concur, and they often do so, notwithstanding the gravest imperfections in the social system, there man proclaims and applauds civilization.”‡

* *Gen. Hist. Civ.*, sec. 1, p. 19; 1st Am. Ed.

† Pres. Woolsey has noticed this among other defects of Mr. Guizot, in an able critique on his *Gen. Hist. Civ.*, in the *New Englander* for 1861.

‡ *Gen. Hist. Civ.*, p. 25.

With great deference to such authority we cannot but think that this statement is altogether too indefinite to satisfy, as well as materially defective. When we see a people among whom there is a good degree of individual and social progress, we do indeed call them civilized, as contrasted with those in barbarism, and among whom there is no such progress. What we mean is, that they are *in process of becoming* civilized, are progressing *towards* a conceivable perfection of individual and social condition which, to our thought, is the standard or measure of their advancement. We allow them to be civilized, in so far as we see them approximating to that ideal condition.

There must be then, in idea at least, a distinct, positive conception, which the word civilization is the proper word to represent, and does in fact represent, in all accurate thought and speech. What is it?—we now ask.

The Latin *civitas*, from *civis*, a citizen, denotes the state—man in society, as opposed to man isolated, or existing in savage life. Hence the adjective *civilis* denoted in the first place that which belonged to the citizen as such; to man as related to the state. But the existence of man in society supposes a practical recognition of the rights of others, and that degree of self restraint on the part of each individual, which such a recognition must involve. The social state, therefore, necessarily brings with it, to a greater or less extent, a softening of manners; and so civil

comes to mean considerate of what is due to others, kind, courteous, just ; to describe, in a word, the virtues and the culture which are demanded in social life. To *civilize* men, then, is to give them these virtues and this culture—to educate them to the manners, the habits and the energy which qualify for the manifold duties and activities of a social condition, and to give them the institutions and laws by which these duties and activities are rightly adjusted and defined. God has established unalterable conditions of order, progress, refinement and well-being in human society. Civilization, therefore, in ideal—perfect civilization—is *the complete conformity of a people to the divinely appointed laws of the life in society for which God has fitted man*. In proportion as any people approach to this conformity they are civilized. In proportion as they recede from this they tend to barbarism. When we speak of the civilization of any nation or age, we mean the *degree of this conformity* which they have reached. The Greeks and Romans, for example, were far enough in many respects, from being in harmony with the essential laws of the highest possible social life ; but in many things, they *had a good measure* of this harmony—an acknowledged *approximation* to the true ideal of it—and so we say that they were civilized. Yet while, in a relative and popular sense, we speak of the civilization of a people who are simply somewhat advanced in social progress, be it more or less, then only will the com-

plete conception of civilization be realized, when man in society shall be what socially, intellectually and morally, he is constitutionally fitted to become.

Civilization, then, as something definitely conceived, is—we repeat—the *ideally perfect condition of human society*, or of man in social life. The process of becoming civilized is advancement towards this. Is it said that it is merely a metaphysical refinement, to distinguish between the two—that it is a useless effort of imagination to place before our minds the ideal of perfect society, of civilization as an absolute reality? On the contrary, we insist that it is impossible to think, or to speak clearly on the subject, without distinguishing between the use of the word civilization to denote a process of becoming, and the absolute state itself to which this process has relation. Why not in this, as in other cases, conceive the perfect thing about which we inquire? Why not form to ourselves a distinct ideal, which shall be ever to our thought the well understood object of desire, the stimulus of our aspirations, the law of our efforts, the good which enkindles the best and sublimest hopes, the far off but visible glory towards which we are always to be pressing on? That some of the profoundest thinkers of all ages have done this is manifest from the fact, that they have in many instances done more—have even attempted to embody in language their conception of a perfect social state. What is Plato's imaginary republic, what are the Utopia of Sir Thomas

More, the *New Atlantis* of Lord Bacon, the *Oceana* of James Harrington, and other similar performances, but illustrations of the fact that the conception of a perfect civilization, of a social state in which all the forces were rightly adjusted, and thoroughly effective in their action, has floated before the minds of those who have most deeply meditated on such themes? It is the same vision that has haunted the souls of the St. Simons, the Fouriers, and the practical Socialists of our own time. That some, or all of these have failed to reach, or at least correctly to set forth, the true ideal of what society should be, and some have attempted to advance society by foolish and impracticable means, proves only the need of divine light in order to a right understanding of this great and difficult subject. It does *not* disprove what we assert to be the truth—that the more clearly it is understood what that state really is towards which society should advance, the more hope there is of a healthful and effectual advancement. It is because the masses of mankind to-day, while they groan under innumerable evils, and often shake governments and institutions with desperate and frantic struggles, do *not* know what they ought to propose to reach, that the very existence of society seems at times to be put in jeopardy. If they did but know what they want—what civilization really is—they would strive in a wiser way.

Accepting this, therefore, as the precise notion of

civilization, that it is the entire conformity of man in society to the great laws of social life and action which God has ordained, a second question meets us, viz: How is such a civilization to be realized? It is plain that a high degree of civilization, in the case of any people, in our own for instance, is possible only on condition of a true knowledge of these divinely instituted laws. Of this knowledge Christianity is the fountain. At least it is *mainly* in the teachings of Christianity that we find it. The Christian truths concerning the character, the purposes and will of God, and the nature, responsibility, dignity and destiny of man; the peculiar Christian ideas in relation to the worth, the rights and the duties of each human being individually considered, must enter as vital forces, into that progress which is to carry society up to a really exalted state. For want of these it was that the incomplete civilizations of the past decayed and perished; nor will there be without them in the future more than in the past, any permanency to social progress. If we, as a young and aspiring nation, desire and hope to see realized in our own future career, a civilization so nearly approaching the ideal that the highest ends of human existence in this world shall here be in a good degree attained by the great body of the people, and if we would have this elevated condition of society to be enduring; it is an absolute necessity that into our civilizing process, our national development and growth, the truths and

forces of Christianity—the *divine wisdom* which gives order and beauty alike to a state or to a world,—shall enter as prominent, acknowledged and practically effective elements. Without these elements, a complete and permanently vital civilization cannot exist. Without them, prosperity and wealth will certainly result in luxurious sensuality; will kindle the fires of passion, produce corruption of private morals, debauch the public conscience, beget an irreligious and unbelieving spirit, poison the springs of literature and taste, and establish wickedness in high places. So it has been elsewhere; so it will be here; and sooner or later, by the very greatness of our advantages, we, if without them, shall be sunk all the more deeply in degeneracy and rottenness. Our light, like that which glowed of old on the banks of the Euphrates, the Nile, the Ilissus, the Tiber, and later of the Tigris and the Guadalquivir, will be quenched hopelessly at last. Since Christianity alone can enable man to comprehend his own nature and position in the universe, this alone can give him a full and symmetrical development. Since this alone has power to purify the fountains of thought and feeling, this alone can raise him above the bondage of appetite and passion, reveal to him his true glory, and move him to a really exalted life. Since Christianity alone sets forth clearly the relation of man to man, the obligations of universal brotherhood, the demands of disinterested love and impartial justice, the neces-

sity, sacredness and limits of human government, and the supremacy of the divine government and the eternal sanctions of its laws, this only it is plain, can perfectly mould society and institutions, can illuminate the path of statesmen and legislators, and infuse into society the spirit of order, obedience and public virtue. Since Christianity alone asserts the dignity of woman, assigns her true position, and guards her purity by enforcing the sanctity of marriage and enjoining the sweet charities of home, this only can produce the refinement and delicacy of manners by which social life is embellished and made happy. Finally, since Christianity alone sets man in the presence of the unseen and the eternal, and brings him into immediate contact with infinite greatness, and infinite goodness in a personal and reigning God, this only can lead him intellectually up to the highest regions of thought, and unfold and exalt his moral nature, till all this powers are tasked in doing the noblest things, and his whole being is attuned to the sublimest love and worship.

Yes, not only is it true that Christianity *has* wrought effectively, and to an extent not yet generally acknowledged in the production of modern civilization as it exists at present; it is also true that it is only by the thorough application of its vital energy to every part of the social system, that a really exalted civilization can in the future be achieved. This can be achieved by any people, it will be achieved by any

people who are thoroughly penetrated with the distinctive truths and the divine spirit of the New Testament. These are not mere assertions. The allegation of the positivists and sceptics, that Christianity has retarded, and still retards the best progress of mankind, is emphatically contradicted by the undeniable facts of history, and by the entire substance and spirit of Christianity itself. Mr. Guizot makes very carefully the distinction—a distinction absolutely necessary to be made, in order to a right understanding of modern history among the western nations—between Christianity and that ecclesiastical corporation called the Church.* The Romanized church but very partially represented the truths and the spiritual power of genuine Christianity. Even of the church, however, the same writer says that she “has exercised a vast and important influence upon the moral and intellectual order of Europe; upon the notions, sentiments and manners of society: has given to the development of the human mind, in our modern world, an extent and variety which it never possessed elsewhere: has largely contributed to the amelioration of the social condition.”† This it did in virtue of the Christian ideas which, with all its errors, it partially embodied, and the Christian spirit which, even more partially, it exhibited. As regards politics and the interests of liberty, Mr. Guizot thinks

* *Gen. Hist. Civ.*, sec. 2, p. 50.

† *Idem*, sec. 6, pp. 151-2-3.

the influence of the church has been baneful.* If so, this has been in virtue of its hierarchy and the assumptions of arbitrary power connected with it; which it must never be forgotten, are no part of Christianity itself, but the product of human infirmity and error. If then the Christian church though but very imperfectly representing Christianity was, as Mr. Guizot maintains, “the great connecting link, the principle of civilization, between the Roman and the barbarian world,”† it is plainly the testimony of history, that Christianity, instead of retarding the progress of society, has been hitherto, so far as allowed to exert its legitimate influence, eminently helpful to it, and even one of its most essential causes. Yet more than this, a careful examination of the institutions of England, for example; and a study of the characteristics of her jurisprudence, her literature, her philosophy, and her educational systems; will show that the influence of Christianity has been one of the largest factors in the production of all that is best and happiest in her condition. English liberty, as it is, is admitted by the most eminent English publicists and statesmen to be very largely the product of Puritan convictions—of the free spirit and the self-sacrificing efforts of noble Christian men, who, from the days of Edward VI, through the reigns of the bloody Mary, of Elizabeth, and onward through the

* *Gen. Hist. Civ.*, p. 153.

† *Idem*, p. 51.

great Revolution, resisted tyranny both ecclesiastical and civil, and made a stand for the rights of man.* To them it was chiefly due that the confirmation of the British constitution was finally achieved in the reign of William and Mary. It is equally true that the most imperishable works of English literature—such as those of Spencer, Shakespeare, Milton, Cowper, Wordsworth, of Bacon, Butler, Addison, Johnson, Burke, and the long array of immortal names—so far embody Christian thought and feeling, and the views of life and character which are the fruit of Christian thought and feeling, that but for the influence of Christianity, these works could never have been written. It is difficult to keep one's patience, while modern sciolists, in their zeal to damage Christianity, presume so far as to contradict facts which are written in words of light before the eyes of all intelligent men.

We are abundantly justified therefore in the assertion, that Christianity is the instrument of all instruments—is that without which all others will prove ineffectual—for the attainment of the highest and best civilization. There is no good ground of hope that we, as a nation, with all our great advantages, can reach it, unless the intellect, the social affections and the moral nature of this great people can be subjected steadily, from generation to generation, to the

* Macaulay's *Hist. England*, vol. I, pp. 57-8, *et passim*.

stimulating, directive and exalting power of spiritual Christianity, as presented pure and simple, in the New Testament itself. The question whether it can be so subjected, it is for us and those who shall come after us, under the providence of God, to settle. It is a question that now confronts us, and the decision of which involves our national destiny. Can we who know and feel this, so infuse into this great and heterogeneous mass the Christian leaven that it shall leaven the whole lump? In other words, can we secure the ascendancy and triumph of genuine, spiritual Christianity in this land? We are compelled to look this matter in the face.

We are brought then, to a third inquiry. What are the *difficulties to be encountered in the attempt* to develop here a thoroughly Christian civilization? They are manifestly great, and should be seriously considered.

First of all, it must be remembered that human nature is here the same as it has showed itself to be elsewhere. We are apt to forget this, practically, at least. We are ready to think that beneath our brilliant skies, under the shadow of our noble mountains, by the side of our lakes and streams, amidst the beauty of our charming valleys and the fertility of our boundless plains; surrounded, in short, with such inspirations and opportunities as here exist; the nature of man has somehow changed greatly for the better. We read about the degeneracy of humanity

in the days of the antediluvians—how every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually, and all flesh corrupted his way upon the earth. We understand how men in the time of Abraham and Moses provoked God by their unconquerable perverseness; and how in Babylonia, Assyria and Egypt, and with the Greeks and Romans, according to all history, and among the nations of the East, and the masses of Europe in modern times; sensuality and debasement have seemed a matter of course, so far as men have been left to their own impulses. We think it quite natural that everywhere else selfishness, appetite and passion should have gained ascendancy and done their work of demoralization. But here, we are ready to conclude, the case is better. Here man is a different creature; far more favorably disposed, as regards the inborn and determining tendencies of his being. Such appears to be the thought of many.

No, we may not deceive ourselves. What the evil propensities which are natural to man; what the passion for wealth, luxury and pleasure, the love of power and eminence; what pride, envy, and other like passions have made man elsewhere; that they tend to make him, and so far as unrestrained, will be sure to make him here. The recent outbreaks of depravity on every side in the commission of the basest crimes, should leave no doubt on this point. They furnish convincing proof that without the coun-

teracting agency of powerful moral forces, our fallen nature will here develop its evil tendencies in all their old activity and strength.

We may go still further. It is plain that there is much in our present and prospective national condition *to awaken and to foster* some of the worst of the evil dispositions to which the heart is naturally prone.

Our national growth—rapid beyond example; our history—illustrative of the constitutional energy and spirit of the people; our vast apparent power—now demonstrated to be real; the acknowledged excellence of our institutions; our actual position and influence among the nations, and our reasonable grounds of hope for a great and prosperous future—all these providential advantages may directly minister to pride and vanity, and to a spirit of self-glorification and arrogance. So the facilities for rising in the world, as it is called—for getting wealth, position, influence and office, and this at an early period of life and with comparatively little pains—tend powerfully to stimulate avarice, to foster the love of fashionable extravagance and show, and to give ascendancy to earthly and sensuous appetites and tastes. Of this the late stupendous breaches of trust into which men whose integrity had never been suspected have been betrayed to their hopeless ruin, afford impressive illustration. Land, too, without limit, in freehold, may be easily acquired. Mineral wealth, such as was never before known, is accessible to all. In a word,

there are almost no hinderances to the largest acquisition in the way of resolute industry. Is not all this too much for our selfish, grovelling nature, unaided, to resist? A life of frugality and hardship is likely to be virtuous; but it has become proverbial that of all states the most hazardous to the highest human welfare is that of great prosperity. The old story of Hannibal, mighty and triumphant amidst desperate struggles, but ruined by ease at Capua, is acted over evermore in the experience of mankind. Facile gains and free self-indulgence, it is well understood, do tend most powerfully to debase a people. We know that the danger here is great.

Our political system also, with many great advantages, has this incidental disadvantage, that it presents strong temptations to political corruption. Under arbitrary governments, power is possible only to the few. They may be tampered with and may become corrupt; but the circle of corruption will of course be limited. The masses have little to do with public affairs. But where power resides in the people, they—the many—are likely to be courted, flattered, deceived if possible, and corrupted when they can be.* Political life, therefore, readily becomes the school of falsehood and unprincipled intrigue; and, as office is open to all aspirants, those who seek the advantages of place are certain to be legion. The danger always must be great, under

*De Tocqueville's *Dem. in America*, vol. I, p. 441. Camb. Ed.

such circumstances, that political partizanship will debauch the public conscience, and make the worse appear the better reason. It will certainly do so if not counteracted. Professed politicians understand this. It is because they do, that they so bitterly resent it, that the Christian pulpit—so far as it is faithful—must and will persist in testing *public* men and measures, as well as men and their doings in private life, by the word and law of God. This is what bad men are most of all afraid of—the application of a test which they cannot bear. They dread the exposure of political profligacy in the light of Christian truth and morals. It is this that they mean most commonly when they complain of political preaching—a thing of which in the pulpits of the country there really is very little indeed. The tendency in political life to pervert the truth, to deal in deceits, and in various ways to trample on the principles of sound morality, is clearly proved by this sensitiveness of reckless men to Christian teaching, and also by the wonder which is so generally felt when a man goes deeply into political life and comes out of it with unblemished purity of character. Such cases are very rare. With so much in our public life that fosters what is worst in the native dispositions of the heart, there must be great difficulty in saving the body of the people from debasement; in elevating them to the love of truth and goodness, and the practice of the higher virtues.

But further still. Since the laws with us depend on the people, there is great danger that the people themselves, becoming corrupt, will break down the safeguards of public order and virtue, by making mischievous laws — laws sanctioning what is hostile to the public welfare. This, indeed, has already come to pass in some of our chief cities. Wickedness has usurped the sacred seats of justice and prostituted official power and station, to the pollution of the fountains of healthful civil life. Let the same state of things come to exist in the country at large which has in some past years revealed itself in the city of New York, for instance; and what would be left us that would be worth much in our heritage? It may come to exist. There are those who desire and labor for it. There are those, it is well known, who would encourage a loose social morality; give license to intemperance, revelry, gambling, prize-fighting, and other degrading vices; who would destroy the sanctity of the Sabbath, and give over society to godlessness. The tendency in any state thus demoralized, so far as the people have the power in their own hands, will of course be to bring down the laws to their own tastes and wishes. Either bad laws will be enacted, or it will become impossible to execute good laws where they exist; and when we consider the small proportion of the actually virtuous and wise, in the entire population of this great country into which immigration is daily pouring all sorts of people, we cannot but see

that great peril to the interests of a Christian civilization lie in this direction. The numerical majority may put all that is worthiest under ban, and frame mischief by laws that protect and encourage vice.

We will only add, on this part of the subject, that the rapid growth and wide dispersion of our population render it exceedingly difficult to keep pace with it in the use of moral remedies. It is difficult even to speak intelligibly — not to say adequately — on this point. The regions now open and rapidly filling with population, are so vast that with the utmost effort we fail to form a just conception of them. If we take the seven states, Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas, Oregon, Nevada and California, and along with these the seven territories soon to be states, Nebraska, Dacotah, Colorado, Utah, Washington, Idaho and Montana — they contain about half the soil of the United States; an area equal to twenty-two New Englands, to thirty states of New York, to one hundred and seventy states of Massachusetts.* The territory of Idaho of itself is nearly seven times as large as New York, which we call the Empire state; or more than twice and two thirds as large as England, Scotland and Ireland taken together.†

* See more extended statements in the Report on Evangelization at the West and South, presented to the National Council at Boston, *Cong. Quar.*, July and October.

† Since the above was written, it has come to the knowledge of the writer, that the vast extent of the territory of Idaho has recently been reduced considerably by the transfer of a portion of it to adjoin-

But it is said, perhaps, that it will be a long time before these vast regions will be inhabited. No, it will not be long. They are inhabited already; and even now are becoming populous, with a rapidity that outstrips thought. Says Prof. Bartlett of Chicago—"The flood of emigration to the gold fields of Colorado, Idaho, Nevada and Montana, is about to impose a solemn duty on the churches. In a recent journey Pres. Blanchard met, in a single day, between Denver and Fort Kearney, *eight hundred and thirty-five yoke of oxen* drawing gold mills; and it is reported in the newspapers, that during the last season, three hundred thousand people went to that mountain region. Soon the soldiers' warrants and the homestead bill will fill the new sections with a great tide of population."*

But I must not detain you with details. Consider that even in the eastern states Christian effort is not keeping fully up with the increase of population; that in the older of what have been called the western states, it falls vastly behind that increase; then add what is now the real West, and the South as opened by the war; and finally remember, that the population of the new regions is daily swelling its numbers, not

ing territories. The statement in the text, therefore, requires *some* qualification. But as I do not know how much, I prefer to leave it as it stands, with this explanation. As the territory was originally, it is strictly true.

* *An Appeal for Ministers*: by Samuel C. Bartlett, D.D., Professor in Chicago Theological Seminary, May, 1865.

only by emigration from the older states, but also from all parts of Europe, and from Eastern Asia, stimulated by the prospect of obtaining gold and lands; and certainly nothing need be said to show that to carry the needed Christian institutions and influences as fast as the demand arises, is a work of stupendous magnitude. To build up a Christian civilization in the face of such obstacles, will be indeed a sublime achievement.

Perhaps it may be thought by some that this view of the matter may well justify discouragement. It might certainly discourage, if regarded only in the spirit of worldly calculation. But in those who believe that Jesus Christ administers the providential government of the world in the interest of righteousness and truth, and who possess the spirit of Christian manhood, the contemplation of difficulties to be surmounted should only call forth loftier courage, and stimulate to more determined and self-sacrificing effort. They should be strong in the energy of an unfaltering faith and hope.

But if the difficulties of the case are great, so, also, we come now to show, are the encouragements. The obstacles, we believe, may all be overcome. It is no dream of a visionary enthusiasm to expect to realize a civilization here, such as the world has not seen before. Let the following things be deliberately considered.

First of all, here, more than ever before, Christianity

is in a position to put forth her spiritual power. We need be at no loss to account for the fact that the progress of modern civilization has in general been so slow. While the gospel of Jesus Christ reveals to man at once his moral disease and its effectual remedy; while in virtue of its action on the individual soul, and the light it throws on all subjects connected with the well-being of mankind, it is fitted to exalt and purify social life to the highest attainable degree; its influence hitherto has commonly been exerted under great disadvantages and embarrassments. Remember against what odds the apostles themselves went forth to carry to a suffering world heaven's grand provision for its relief. "A religion for mankind, says Dr. Neander, must have appeared — as viewed from that position of antiquity, according to which every nation had its own particular religion — a thing contrary to nature, threatening the dissolution of all existing order." *

To oppose it must of course have seemed a duty. Christianity had therefore to encounter not only depravity and prejudice as expressed in the strong currents of popular feeling; but likewise the whole resistless force of the hostile imperial government. She went forth in weakness to grapple with gigantic foes; and had to advance through contests, fires and blood. Then came the overthrow of the Roman Empire, in which she was buried beneath the ruins

* *Hist. Ch. Relig. and Ch.*, pp. 89, 90.

of the ancient civilization and the intermingled elements of barbarism. Against what adverse influences had she then to make her way! "Society sunk for several centuries after the dissolution of the Roman Empire — says Hallam — into a condition of utter depravity; where, if any vices could be selected as more eminently characteristic than others, they were falsehood, treachery and ingratitude."* In this general corruption was involved, as shown by the same writer, the decline of learning, the corruption and ignorance of the clergy, and the general reign of superstition and brute force. Christianity lived, but she lived in fetters. Held in bonds by ecclesiastical arrangements and lost sight of in civil anarchies, she was like Sampson grinding at the mill, unable for the time, without miracles wrought to help her, to fulfill her mission to any considerable extent. Such was the state of things through all the middle ages. Even since the Reformation, spiritual Christianity, instead of applying herself without embarrassment to her appropriate work, has been almost everywhere waging a contest against illegitimate power, for the vindication of her right to the free and effective use of her peculiar forces. The coming of the Pilgrim Fathers to these shores was itself one of the fruits of this contest, maintained nobly, but with very limited success, even in Protestant England.

But thanks be to God, that what the pilgrims came

* Hallam's *Middle Ages*, p. 124.

to find, they found; and have made an essential part of our national heritage.

“ Ay, call it holy ground,
The soil where first they trod !
They have left unstained what there they found,
Freedom to worship God.”

And not freedom of worship alone; freedom of Christian thought, activity and progress; liberty for Christianity to deploy her forces and to advance them well marshaled to the great battle against the powers of evil. Here, *for the first time in her history*, Christianity has attained in civil society her true position. Hindered by no civil interference, bound in no bonds of ecclesiastical authority, untrammelled by any alliance with the state, she stands in her own divine strength, can wield at will her own spiritual weapons, and may go forth in the spirit of her great author conquering and to conquer. Here the question may, and will be fairly settled, so far as can be seen, whether pure Christianity can elevate, refine and bless in this life, and at the same time train for the life immortal, the masses of the race. Fully believing as we do, that the gospel of Jesus Christ was given of God to accomplish precisely this, we may not doubt, we must not doubt, that its mighty moral power is here to be exhibited in results transcendently beautiful; and rich and diversified beyond all that has yet been seen. We are bound to expect, that if those who bear the Christian name are in any good

degree faithful to their Lord, his truth will beget new moral life and energy in this great people; will pervade and purify public and private life; will consecrate literature and art, and pour sweet and healing influences into all the fountains at which thirsting humanity is wont to drink. We stand on solid ground when we take encouragement from this view of the position of Christianity in this free land. "As a matter of history, unquestionable and conspicuous — says Isaac Taylor — Christianity has in every age fed the hungry, and clothed the naked, and redeemed the captive, and visited the sick. It has put to shame the atrocities of the ancient popular amusements, and annihilated sanguinary rites, and brought slavery into disesteem and disuse, and abolished excruciating punishments; and has even softened the ferocity of war; and, in a word, is seen constantly at work, edging away oppressions, and moving on towards the perfect triumph which avowedly it meditates — that of removing from the earth every woe which the inconsideration or the selfishness, or the malignity of man inflicts upon his fellows." * If it has done all this for man in this life, at the same time inspiring good hope for the life to come, under the great disadvantages which have hitherto attended it, what may not reasonably be looked for with every circumstance favorable to its action? Where, if not here, shall its transforming influence be seen?

* *Nat. Hist. Enthusiasm*, sec. 7, p. 156.

Where, if not here, shall it win its divinest triumphs?

But we may add also, in the second place, that never before, since Christ ascended to his throne, had Christianity, in any country, *such resources of all sorts at her command*, as she now possesses here. She has sometimes indeed *seemed* to have kings, emperors and popes wielding the whole power and wealth of mighty states, enlisted in her interest. But the truth has generally turned out at last to be, that while apparently devoted to her ends, they have simply been seeking to use her as a help to the attainment of their own. Considered as a spiritual power, she has herself, elsewhere, had in fact but very limited means at her own disposal. It is not so here. By the decision of the highest courts, the Christian religion stands acknowledged as an essential element of our organic national life.* Because it is so interwoven with our system of government and laws, it is not only safe from outrage, but is invested with dignity and made venerable in the eyes of the great body of the people. A very large part of the wealth of the country is in the hands of those who are either Christians in heart, or at least apprehend intellectually the nature and the value of Christianity, and are ready to promote its interests. The large and cheerful liberality with which, during the last four years of public distress, vast sums have been given for the relief of suffering for the support of the peculiar Christian agen-

* See *Works of Daniel Webster*, vol. VI, p. 175.

cies, and the endowment of institutions for Christian education, must be allowed to demonstrate the fact, that any amount of wealth which a wise and healthful Christian enterprise can use profitably and well, may with but little difficulty be obtained. It is quite apparent that thoughtful men are becoming more and more convinced that the noblest use of wealth is the appropriation of it to the promotion of the intellectual and religious advancement of mankind. It is more and more clearly seen that it is in the application of a large portion of our abundance to the sublime purpose of elevating humanity by means of a thorough Christian culture, that we are to save ourselves from the perils of an unparalleled prosperity.

So in regard to men. As Christianity is a system of truth addressed to the understandings and the hearts of men, so it was the will of its divine author, that Christian men should be charged with the responsibility of giving it effect. While all disciples are to be lights in the world, centres of Christian influence, in whatever sphere of life they move; both the genius of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the tenor of his commission, require that many should devote themselves directly and entirely to the work of applying Christian truth as a saving power, and setting forward the Christian cause. In view of the greatness of the field that calls for laborers, and the difficulties of all sorts that attend the undertaking, a mighty army of Christian men of the highest gifts

and of liberal culture, are now demanded, and will be for long years to come.

What then? The evangelical church catholic, has a vast multitude of sons and daughters, either already renewed in heart, or to be renewed in heart in answer to the prayers of godly fathers and mothers, who may be induced to consecrate their lives to the service of Christ in the ministry, to the work of presiding over the fountains of Christian learning, and of creating a fresh and living religious literature; and to all the practical details of the process of moral enlightenment and training. It is indeed true, that the students in our colleges and theological seminaries have been reduced in numbers during our late struggle, and the ministry and other departments of labor, are at this moment in urgent need of men. But even now the tide of students is setting back; and what is yet more encouraging, a new and more profound conviction of the honor and blessedness of a life given wholly to the work of extending Christ's religion, is taking possession of the public mind, which will doubtless lead many to a decision to make that honor and blessedness their own. Let but Christian parents be moved to consecrate to Christ, for the office of the ministry and the immediate service of religion in other forms of labor, the most gifted and noble of their sons and daughters; let them teach these children from infancy to regard the advancement of the Christian religion in the world as the grandest object

to which they can devote their lives; and it will soon be seen that there is no lack of men to meet the exigencies of the time, however great they are. It is only because the leaders of the Christian host have been remiss in calling for them, that so inadequate a number have for the last few years enrolled themselves. But now that God himself, by his providence, has sent his summons through the land—"Whom shall we send, and who will go for us?"—a new era has manifestly dawned. As of late in the great political life-struggle of the nation, we saw vast armies start forth as if by magic, and hurry to the field; so in the great moral life-struggle that is now impending, it is going to be seen, we are persuaded, that squadrons of Christian champions are to be found advancing, full of holy ardor for the strife. Christianity can call into her service, and will, an amount of educated mind, and of practical sagacity and energy far beyond what she has ever heretofore been able to enlist; and along with men and money will come, are coming, all other resources in large measure. She is to meet the decisive struggle thoroughly equipped.

It only remains to say, finally, that God's providential dealings with us as a people, from the first, have been such as to justify a firm belief that it is *his settled purpose* to build up here a Christian civilization which shall be a light and a blessing to the world; and that we may, therefore, confidently expect that his coöperation and blessing, will abundantly attend wise Christian effort.

We might plant ourselves on the general truth, that this land is a part of *the world* which, as a whole, is pledged to Jesus Christ. We might strengthen our hearts with the unqualified promise—"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." But the memories of our past history are likely to come home more effectually to the heart. We cannot look thoughtfully at that history without perceiving, on every page, the marks of God's special care, and the indications of a definite purpose—a purpose to construct here, a social life higher and better than has ever before existed. Time will not suffer me to give this statement a particular illustration; but the great providential facts stand out so prominently that they cannot be overlooked. God was in the hearts of the noble men in the fatherland, who first attained the true conception of civil and religious liberty. God was in the Mayflower, and with the band who first set foot on Plymouth rock. It was this that made them what they were. "The Puritan,—says Mr. Bancroft — disclaiming all merit prostrated himself in the dust before heaven; looking out upon mankind, how could he but respect himself, whom God had chosen and redeemed? He cherished hope; he possessed faith; as he walked the earth his heart was in the skies. Angels hovered round his path charged to minister to his soul. Spirits of darkness leagued together to tempt him from his allegiance. His burning piety could use no liturgy; his penitence

could reveal his transgressions to no confessor. He knew no superior in sanctity. He could as little become the slave of a priestcraft as of a despot. He was himself a judge of the orthodoxy of the elders; and if he feared the invisible powers of the air, of darkness, and of hell, he feared nothing on the earth. Puritanism constituted, not the Christian clergy, but the Christian people, the interpreter of the divine will. The voice of the majority was the voice of God; and the *issue of Puritanism was therefore popular sovereignty*.* Such, according to the calm testimony of the historian, was the "right seed," planted by the hand of God, from which, in his purpose, a new order of men and institutions was to spring.

Equally significant has been the course of providence since the foundations of our greatness were so laid. God manifestly watched over the growth of the colonies through all their early perils. God gave us national independence in due time. God has founded and shaped our institutions of learning and religion. Through the late bloody and decisive war—a war involving a decision as to the fundamental rights of man—he has led us as with a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. He has destroyed slavery, that cancer which was eating out the vitals of the nation: so removing one of the greatest impediments in the way of social progress; throwing open

* *Hist. United States*, vol. I, p. 462.

the whole country to Christian influence; and leaving nothing to prevent us as a people from becoming one in our interests and in the sympathy of brotherhood.

With such facts as these fresh in our recollection, can we misinterpret the divine purpose? Can we doubt that God intends, though it should be through severest disciplines, to give us the true wisdom—to raise us by the agency of Christianity faithfully applied, to a state of moral elevation, to refinement, dignity and strength? It is certainly no presumption to assume, that in the experiment we are here to make, of the power of an unfettered Christianity possessed of ample resources, to advance a people to a true and exalted civilization, we are working in harmony with God, and that God will therefore go forth with us in his might, and will give our humble efforts a most liberal success. The whole course of his providence towards us as a people, from the first, authorizes, aye, demands the firm conviction that he will. We ought confidently to expect to witness such illustrations of the divine efficacy of the gospel, and of the power of the Holy Ghost, as have never before been seen.

Since then Christianity—the gospel of Jesus Christ as a divine and renovating spiritual power—has here opportunity for complete development and action; since it is able to command, almost without limit, the resources of all kinds that are essential to its work; and since, in attempting to give it ascendancy, the

Christian churches are plainly working in harmony with God's clearly indicated purpose, and may therefore count with certainty on his coöperation and his blessing; let it be settled in every Christian mind, that notwithstanding the great difficulties to be surmounted, a Christian civilization is here to be achieved, more nearly approximating to the true ideal, than any thing that has yet existed. Let it be held for certain that the generations that shall come after us shall here, from ocean to ocean, and from the great lakes to the southern gulf, enjoy the broadest and most healthful freedom that is consistent with the order of society and the reign of wholesome law; an intellectual and social life in which the highest energy of mind, and the finest culture of taste and of affection shall be seen; and a moral and religious elevation in which humanity shall appear in some good measure worthy of itself and of its immortal destiny. These great results, of course, will not be reached without an inconceivable amount of wise and earnest Christian effort, and that long and steadily continued. But if God be for us, who or what can be against us? Success to Christian fidelity is sure.

It is almost too obvious to be said that in this work of Christian civilization, on the success of which the well-being of the countless millions who after us shall live beneath these skies essentially depends, the higher institutions of learning have a part to bear

which places them as agencies, next in importance to the gospel of Christ itself. Mind will inevitably rule the vast masses of the people, and will determine, under providence, their character and state. It always has been, and probably always will be true, that the comparatively few strong and sagacious intellects dominate and mould the many. What then will be the condition of this magnificent country a hundred years hence, if *perverted* mind — mind ignorant of what is most worth knowing and possessed by the spirit of ungodliness and infidelity — shall gain and keep ascendancy? A picture horrible to contemplate presents itself to thought; a scene of wrestling avarice, of furious lust, of mad ambition, of hate and violence, and all fiendish impulses and passions; evil uncontrolled, sweeping in mighty surges, to the utter destruction of all that should have been beautiful and good. The bare possibility of such a future is enough to stir every Christian and patriotic heart.

But the only way to save our country from such a future is to make sure the ascendancy of *Christian* mind, prepared by the severest discipline, and enriched by the largest culture. This must be done from one generation to another. It can be done only by planting, at the proper points, all over the wide land, seats of liberal learning whose combined influences shall carry intellectual and moral light and life and health to every remote recess. It is happily not necessary to offer any proof of this. That institutions

furnishing the facilities for high intellectual and moral culture do form the very foundation stones of a genuine Christian civilization, was a profound conviction with the Pilgrim Fathers; and the result of that conviction has been that for acuteness and force of mind, for general intelligence, for purity of social life, for healthfulness of moral feeling, and for sturdy devotion to well-regulated liberty, the people of New England are to-day a proverb throughout the world. In the past we see the work demanded of us in the future. It is for us to take care that educational institutions of the highest order, liberally endowed, furnished with ample libraries and all the apparatus of instruction, embosomed in classic shades and pervaded by a classic atmosphere, the whole consecrated and hallowed by the spirit of our holy religion, shall be provided in such numbers and positions that no portion of the land shall be without the benefits which such institutions are certain to confer. Once established, they will live in the hearts of the people. They will grow richer and richer, from generation to generation, in venerable associations and inspiring memories, and in the recorded and cherished names of the great and good. From them will perpetually go forth, not only a thoroughly furnished Christian ministry, but Christian statesmen, lawyers and physicians; Christian educators of all ranks; Christian philosophers, moralists, poets, orators, historians; men of pure tastes and sound wisdom; in short, men

who in every department of intellectual labor shall instruct, refine and elevate society. It is so that the Christian civilization, which we believe awaits us in the future, must be reached. The glorious fabric must have liberal, solid learning as its sure and firm foundation.

I fear that I have trespassed on your patience, but the greatness of the theme may be my apology in part. With a few concluding words I will relieve your attention.

The question which now presses on us, on the Christian people of the land, is this—are we prepared to meet, are we actually meeting the great emergency which in the providence of God is presented at this time? The next fifty years, perhaps a shorter period, will, in all probability, determine decisively the character and destiny of this great people for centuries. There is enough in the thought of this to set one's soul on fire. Think what issues are crowded into a single life-time! The mighty struggle for mastery, for permanent dominion, between perverted mind and mind in sympathy with God, is already waxing hot; and it cannot be very long before one or the other shall be in the dominant position. I trust that we have at least a little of the spirit that ought to animate us; and it is *just now* that powerful blows must be struck, if we are to have success. This society must resolutely pursue its most important work. It must have a very much larger place in the thoughts,

